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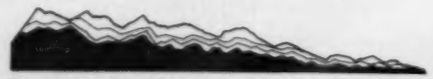
Avalanche Safety Information

for
Washington
and
Northern Oregon



Northwest Avalanche Center

USDA Forest Service

Pacific Northwest Region

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Deadly Avalanches

Avalanches in Washington and Oregon kill more people than any other natural hazard. Although large destructive slides are obviously harmful, an avalanche does not have to be big to be deadly. Many fatal slides, often triggered by their unwary victims, travel less than 300 feet.

At an average speed of 80 mph, avalanches cannot be outrun. Even slow moving slides can trap their victims unmercifully.

The best way to avoid a life endangering situation is to know where and when avalanches may occur... and then stay out of their way.

Wellington, Washington, March 1910 - Ninety six train passengers lost their lives to the single swoop of a snowy torrent.

photo courtesy of the Museum of History and Industry, Seattle

Northwest Avalanche Center

The Northwest Avalanche Center (NWAC) is a central forecasting and information service. Housed in the NOAA National Weather Service Seattle forecast office and administered by the USDA Forest Service, NWAC is a cooperatively funded program* with two primary functions:

Snow and Avalanche Safety:

- Assist safety programs by gathering and studying useful weather, snow, and avalanche data;
- Produce and distribute a wide variety of mountain weather and avalanche forecasts.

Backcountry Travelers:

- Provide current information on snowpack structure and avalanche hazard;
- Forecast expected changes in snow and avalanche conditions.

The professional mountain meteorologists and avalanche specialists at NWAC produce and issue forecasts and information daily from about **mid-November to mid-April.**

The forecast region includes all snow covered terrain within the Olympics and Cascades of Washington and Northern Oregon at elevations below 7000 feet.

Northwest Avalanche Center
7600 Sandpoint Way NE, Bin C-15700
Seattle, Washington 98115

Avalanche Safety Programs

Several agencies around the region not only contribute to NWAC but are involved in their own avalanche safety programs.

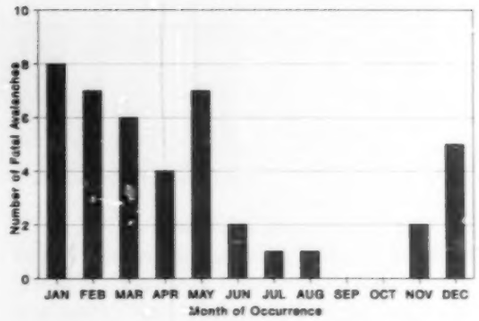
- **Washington State Department of Transportation:**
Employs experienced avalanche specialists to monitor and control avalanches and ensure safe travel along major mountain routes.

- **National Park Service:**
Trains their Park Rangers and ski patrols to recognize dangerous avalanche conditions and warn Park visitors of impending hazards.

- **Ski Areas of Washington and Oregon:**
Employ avalanche control teams and snow safety personnel to monitor and control avalanches within the ski area boundaries. **Heli-ski areas and other winter guide services** also employ avalanche specialists to help plan guided routes safely.

- **USDA Forest Service**
Monitors avalanche and weather conditions to help visitors with useful information for safe backcountry travelling.

Be Aware



In Washington and Oregon, hundreds of dangerous avalanches occur each year. So far, 43 have been deadly enough to kill 175 people.

A snowy slope can avalanche at **any** time of the year. Although avalanche accidents are most common during the middle of winter, many climbers in the Northwest are caught by avalanches after a sudden summer storm or while glissading down a snow slope in the spring. **Be on guard at all times.**

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* NWAC is supported by the:

- USDA-Forest Service
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- National Weather Service
- Ski Areas of Washington and Oregon
- National Park Service
- Washington State Parks
- other private groups and individuals

Northwest Avalanche Information

AVALANCHE HOT-LINES

in Seattle: (206) 526-6677
in Portland: (503) 326-2400

- **CALL the Avalanche HOT-LINE**

These telephone recordings operate 24 hours a day. They are updated daily with NWAC avalanche hazard forecasts and snowpack analyses during the wintertime and include special statements at other times of the year.

- **CALL OR VISIT a nearby National Forest Office or National Park Office**

Many of these locations have a printed copy of all the HOT-LINE information. It is displayed in the office or through a window visible from the outside.

- **CHECK at a nearby ski area**

Ask the ski patrol or at the ticket office to find out if avalanche information is available.

- **LISTEN to NOAA Weather Radio**

NOAA Weather Radio will broadcast avalanche warnings when unstable snow is widespread and avalanches become likely in popular backcountry areas.

- **ASK a local mountaineering store**

Many companies are now gaining direct access to Forest Service and NWAC information.

- **CALL your local newspaper, TV, or radio station**

NWAC avalanche information is distributed daily to many media services.

General Information Sources

PAMPHLETS: WSDOT *Avalanche Control*; USDA-FS *Snow Avalanches*; NOAA *Weather Radio*
BOOKS: *ABC's of Avalanche Safety; Snow Sense; The Avalanche Book; USDA-FS Avalanche Handbook; Avalanche Safety for Skiers and Climbers; Snowy Torrents*
TRAINING: National Avalanche School; National Ski Patrol; Red Cross; Mountaineers; Mazamas; local mountain shops and guide services
VIDEOS: *Avalanche Awareness: A Question of Balance*
PERIODICALS: *The Avalanche Review*

Posted Information Sites

The map above shows general locations where NWAC avalanche information is posted. For specific locations call:

Forest Service / National Park Service
Outdoor Recreation Information Center
(206) 442-0170
(503) 326-2877

REMEMBER: Obtaining avalanche information is just one step in making your trip to the mountains a safe one. Because Northwest weather and snowpack conditions fluctuate rapidly over short distances and short time spans, you should remain aware of the changing situation at all times.

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